

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ARAB WORLD

LEADING TO NEUTRALISM

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The Arab League states are at present split on the question of Arab policy toward the bi-polar world. Iraq early in 1955 cast its lot with the West, through the Turkish-Iraqi Pact. Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Syria declined such an association in favor of an Arab pact free from foreign alignments. Lebanon and Jordan remain uncommitted.

Continued Arab suspicion of Western intentions in the Arab world, lack of full appreciation of the danger Communism poses to Arab institutions and Arab tradition, and Communist activities in the Arab world are principally responsible for the present diversified Arab attitudes toward East and West. However, inter-Arab rivalries also prevent the establishment of a common Arab policy.

I. Events Affecting Arab-West Relations

A. Origins of Arab Nationalism

The "Arab Awakening," brought to life simultaneously with the "Young Turks" revolution of 1908 by Arabic-speaking Christians and Muslims, initially began as a movement for revival of Arab society within the framework of the Ottoman Empire. The liberal revolution of the "Young Turks" envisaged the subject peoples fully equal with the Turks. It was enthusiastically supported by the Arabic-speaking population. But Turkish nationalism proved stronger than liberalism, and Turkish authorities gradually became more arbitrary and oppressive than the old had ever been in their relations with their non-Turkish subjects. The growth of Turkish nationalism was matched by that of Arab nationalism and "pan-Arabism," a movement aligned with modern nationalism and rooted in the Arab past.

B. World War I Developments

In World War I, Arab nationalists east of the Suez Canal deserted Turkey for the Allies to free themselves of Turkish despotism. Led by Sharif Husayn, the sharif of Mecca and head of the Hashimite family, they fought actively with British expeditionary forces in the Palestine-Syria

desert front. The conclusion of the conflict brought the final disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the occupation of its Arab territory north of Hijaz and Najd by British, Arab and finally French forces.

The occupied territory was divided in 1920 into mandated states under France and Britain, despite the British promise to uphold the independence of the Arab region within the frontier proposed by Sharif Husayn. France received Syria and Lebanon, and the British received Iraq, East Jordan and Palestine.

In Egypt (nominally a part of the Ottoman Empire, but actually under British occupation rule since 1882), nationalist elements refused to cooperate with British occupation forces. In 1914 when the Ottoman Empire declared its armed neutrality in the European conflict, the British authorities found it necessary to declare martial law, abolish the khedival\* set-up and make Egypt a British protectorate. In 1922, following continued nationalist resistance, the British Government granted Egypt its independence, but on terms which preserved for Great Britain final control of Egyptian policy--reserving decisions on security, imperial communications, defense, foreign interests and minorities and the Sudan, pending a final agreement.

### C. Post-War I Developments

Arab nationalism, which during World War I spurned the Turkish sponsored "pan-Islamism" and "Jihad" (struggle against the infidels), thus became the Arab formula for resistance to Western penetration and domination. The ensuing struggle brought several revolts against British and French rule and won some of the Arab states part of their national demands, after the local governments agreed to grant the occupying powers long term concessions.

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\* From the Persian title "khedive" (ruler), bestowed in 1867 by the Turkish Sublime Porte on Isma'il Pasha (grandson of Muhammad Ali, and then governor general of the semi-autonomous Ottoman province of Egypt) and his direct successors. The bestowal was made in recognition of two actions made by Isma'il Pasha in 1866: extension of military aid to Turkish forces, hard pressed by Cretan insurgents, and raising the Egyptian annual tribute to the Sublime Porte from 307,000 to 720,000 Turkish pounds.

On 16 November 1932 the Iraqi parliament ratified a new Anglo-Iraqi treaty through which Iraq became an independent state. Iraq, however, had to accept certain British reservations: free disposition of the resources of Iraq in the event of war and permanent use of the air bases.

On 26 August 1936 Egypt concluded a treaty with Great Britain revising the 1922 treaty. The treaty was ratified by the Egyptian parliament on 15 and 18 November and by the British parliament on 24 and 25 November. It eliminated the military occupation of Egypt by British combat forces, except for 10,000 troops in the coastal zone to defend the Suez Canal. In recognition of the absolute sovereignty of Egypt, Britain was to be represented in Cairo by an ambassador, who was to be accorded precedence over the representatives of other powers. Britain was to sponsor Egypt's entry into the League of Nations.

Both countries bound themselves not to enter into any relations with other countries detrimental to their alliance. Egypt bound herself to place all the resources of the country at the disposal of Britain in time of war and, if necessary, to introduce martial law and censorship. Egypt was to build up her railway network at the points regarded by Britain as strategic. Without prejudice to the question of sovereignty the administration of the Sudan remained in the hands of the governor-general, to be appointed by Britain to whom the Egyptian troops in the Sudan also were subject.

*& the Sudan*  
The immigration of Egyptians was to be limited only for reasons of public security and health. Britain declared her readiness to support Egypt in the abolition of capitulations, with the ultimate object of dissolving mixed courts as well. The treaty was initially concluded for 20 years, after which any differences were to be submitted to the Council of the League of Nations.

On 9 September 1936 Syria concluded a treaty with France granting Syria its independence. France, however, was permitted to maintain one garrison each in Hawran and Latakia provinces and two permanent air bases. The treaty, which was not to enter into effect for three years, was never ratified by the French parliament.

On 13 November 1936 Lebanon concluded with France a treaty similar to the Syrian treaty. It was not ratified by the French parliament either, however.

#### D. World War II

The outbreak of World War II found articulate Arabs divided in their attitude toward the Allies and the Axis. Appeals for revenge, coupled with initial victories scored by the Axis, caused some of the extreme nationalists and a number of opportunist politicians to side openly against the Allies. Other nationalist elements, having secured promises of independence after the war found cooperation with the occupying powers expedient. During the last phases of the war pressure from the US and the UK brought Syria and Lebanon their independence from France.

This development removed much of the imbedded Arab suspicion of Western designs on their region and gave impetus to other Arab states seeking revision of their treaties with the UK. Their roles in Syria and Lebanon brought the US and the UK a high degree of popularity in the Arab World for a time.

#### E. Developments after World War II

Postwar treaty negotiations between the UK and Egypt, Iraq and East Jordan proved to a certain extent fruitless. While East Jordan accepted the British terms, Iraq and Egypt balked, bending <sup>to</sup> the public clamor for unconditional evacuation of UK forces.

Subsequently, the generally unfriendly Western (including Communist) approach to Arab aspirations in Palestine in 1947, the Arab-Zionist war and the debacle of Arab armies and the establishment of the state of Israel exacerbated a situation already charged by Arab diplomatic failure.

Xenophobia, originally restricted to fundamentalist Muslims, who have always rejected the West and everything Western, began to find subscribers among frustrated nationalists. Muslim political-religious movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, found new adherents and mushroomed throughout the Arab East, challenging established political parties.

Nationalist parties, formed and led by individuals most of whom had been educated in Western-directed institutions, also found it expedient to ride the tide and adopt a hostile attitude toward the West. Local governments, superficially organized along Western lines and controlled by old-line politicians, had either to give in to the waves of anti-Westernism or to face the wrath of angry street mobs in urban centers. Politicians who maintained their moderation became discredited.

#### F. The Cold War

In 1948 the cold war ushered in a period novel to the Arabs in their nascent history. The Western world, hitherto united against the Arab position in Palestine, was divided into two blocs, each vying for supremacy. To both, the Arab world was a strategic area worthy of control. To the Arab world in general neither bloc was attractive. The Arabs believed they could take advantage of the new situation to achieve the aspirations they had failed to realize by diplomacy or force.

The Western bloc, represented by the UK, was in possession of a number of military bases and facilities in the Arab East. It also had binding mutual defense treaties with Egypt, Iraq and Jordan. Aware of mounting Arab resentment against the presence of foreign troops, the West became anxious to arrive at settlements with local governments, without prejudicing its rights to the bases in time of war. As a condition for replacement of the treaties, held obsolete by the Arab states, it proposed that the Arab states, singly or collectively, join a regional defense arrangement committed to the West. To allay Arab suspicion, the West attempted to expose the real intentions of Communism and the threat it poses to defenseless nations.

The Communist bloc was at an over-all disadvantage in the Arab world, without bases there and without appeal to the tradition-bound Arabs. Its unsympathetic attitude toward Arab aspirations in Palestine in 1947 and 1948 caused even the Utopians among the Arabs to doubt the sincerity of Communist governments and their declared intentions. Local Communist parties were weak and ineffective.

The Communist bloc saw in the bases an obstacle to its long range objectives in the area. It contended that Western bases and Western-

promoted regional alliances in the Near East were a direct threat to its security. To remove this obstacle and threat it embarked on a campaign designed to deny the Arab world to the West. It charged that the bases were means through which Western imperialism has managed to perpetuate its exploitation of the whole region. It also denounced regional defense schemes as Western conspiracies aimed at involving the Arab nations in a catastrophic war. To counter Western charges that Communism was not compatible with Islam, the USSR protested that under its rule Muslim subjects have continued to enjoy unrestricted religious freedom and that Western charges were unfounded. To lend force to this claim it invited at various intervals a number of Muslim leaders to visit the Soviet Union to observe the condition of its Muslim citizens. It also permitted a limited number of Muslim leaders from Central Asia to perform their pilgrimage to Mecca.

In the political, economic and cultural fields the Soviet government and its satellites opened an offensive aimed at winning the Arab peoples. Czechoslovakia allowed certain Arab governments to purchase a limited number of small arms and ammunition, and the USSR intimated on several occasions its willingness to supply Egypt's and Syria's military needs, under certain conditions. In the UN the USSR altered its position to favor the Arab point of view in Arab-Israeli disputes. Communist trade representatives toured the Arab World and were quick to negotiate bilateral trade agreements with local governments. USSR and satellite cultural and youth fronts extended invitations to Arab intellectuals and youths to participate in their international events.

The Arab attitude toward cold war developments was opportunistic. Arab governments under obligation to the UK saw in the cold war a chance to improve their status. Revision of their bilateral treaties with the UK and favorable solution of the Palestine question were among the conditions stipulated by Arab governments for joining the West in a regional defensive arrangement.

Extreme nationalists and fundamentalist Muslims, disillusioned by their governments' past diplomatic and military failures and ever suspicious of Western designs on their respective countries, regarded

the cold war as an opportunity to rid their countries of foreign occupation and domination. Consequently they began to press their governments to insist, in their negotiations with the UK, on complete withdrawal of all foreign troops without committing their countries to the West. They intimated that failure of the UK to meet their wishes might drive their countries to join the opposite bloc.

Local Communists and fellow travelers echoed Moscow's line. The Arab-UK dispute over stipulations in treaties under negotiation and over regional defense proposals provided the local Communists an opening through which they could work to obliterate the stigma of having once favored the partition of Palestine and to gain acceptance on the national level, hitherto denied to them by the traditionally conservative Arabs. Condemning the West's position on the treaties and regional defense schemes as contrary to the national aspirations of the people, they strove to equate the objectives of Communism with those of Arab nationalism. Nationalist elements which refused to accept the Communist interpretation were termed reactionary and in the service of colonialism and Anglo-American imperialism.

#### G. Disillusion, Neutralism

Arab hopes for quick realization of their aspirations, however, did not materialize. Early Iraqi, Egyptian and Jordanian negotiations for revision of their UK treaties fell short of their objectives, and combined Arab efforts with the West to settle the Palestine problem in accordance with their plans were unproductive.

UK-Egyptian negotiators were unable to resolve their differences over the status of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and the control of UK-occupied Suez Canal Zone. UK-Iraqi negotiations resulted in a draft treaty which was not acceptable to extreme nationalists and led to bloody demonstrations in Iraq, causing the government to discard the treaty. UK-Jordanian negotiations were successfully concluded, but again the treaty did not meet with the approval of extreme nationalists, who objected to the continued presence of UK troops and control of the Jordanian army (the Arab Legion) by British senior officers.

On the Palestine question, the Western powers felt reluctant to force Israel to accept the main Arab demands: to withdraw to the frontiers

stipulated in the 1947 UN Palestine partition plan, and to readmit to Israel Arab refugees desiring to return to their homes and lands, or compensate those who were not willing to return. Instead, they recommended mediation and amicable settlement of outstanding Arab-Israeli differences. The mediation attempts that followed proved to a great extent fruitless, because neither the Israelis nor the Arabs would compromise on their stated positions.

The impasse that followed in Arab-West relations lent some weight to anti-West arguments of the extremists and Communists against close association with the West, resulting in a rapid growth of a neutralist sentiment among uncommitted Arab moderates. This growth was paralleled by a diminution in the popular following of the Arab ruling groups.

By 1951 neutralism had become accepted by the majority of articulate Arabs, and as a result the ruling groups, to remain in power, found it necessary to adopt toward the West an attitude reflecting this sentiment. Consequently, the pro-Western ruling group in Iraq suspended indefinitely its official treaty negotiations with the UK, while the Egyptian Wafdist negotiators insisted that the only treaty acceptable to them was one which provides for complete evacuation of UK troops from the Suez Canal Zone and the unity of the Nile Valley (Egypt and Sudan). Led by Egypt, the Arab states also declined to join the Western-sponsored joint defense scheme MEDO (Middle East Defense Organization), preferring a wholly Arab pact.

#### H. Partial Improvement in Arab-West Relations

Western efforts to assure the Arab states of the West's good intentions toward them produced limited but promising results. The Western efforts included the 1950 Franco-US-UK tripartite declaration guaranteeing the Arab states-Israel status-quo, US offers of technical assistance and the UK's willingness to grant most of Egypt's demands on the Suez Canal and to allow the Sudan to choose its own destiny. In 1954 Iraq signed a military aid agreement with the US. Egypt concluded its protracted negotiations with the UK by signing a treaty returning the Suez Canal Zone to Egyptian military control but making it available to the UK in the event of armed attack against any member of the Arab League or Turkey.



The authorities in Iraq consequently felt that the time was ripe for the Arab governments to repudiate their neutrality and formally align their countries with the West. However, Egypt, pressed by domestic difficulties and Muslim Brotherhood agitation against the new Anglo-Egyptian treaty, believed that action should be held in abeyance. In the meantime it felt that the Arab Collective Security Pact should be strengthened and should serve as the basis for Arab defense against external aggression in any Arab-West agreement. Iraq believed that the Arab Collective Security Pact was not sufficient and therefore should be broadened to include Turkey, Pakistan, Iran, the US and the UK.

Not willing to wait indefinitely, Iraq subsequently took the initiative and opened bilateral negotiations with Turkey, a member of NATO. On 12 January 1955 the Iraqi and Turkish governments issued a joint communique stating that the two governments, to strengthen the security of the Middle East, had agreed to conclude in the near future a mutual defensive pact. The communique expressed the hope that other Middle Eastern countries would also join the pact.

On 24 February 1955, undaunted by subsequent opposition from the Egyptian and Saudi-Arabian governments and opposition from Communists, leftists and extremist elements, the Iraqi government concluded its pact with Turkey. On 26 February the Iraqi Parliament ratified the pact.\*

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\* The agreement states that the parties will cooperate for their security and defense, consistent with Article 51 of the UN Charter, measures for which will be determined by competent authorities of the contracting parties as soon as the pact comes into force. It further states that the parties will refrain from interference in each other's internal affairs and declares that the dispositions of the pact "are not in contradiction with any of the international obligations contracted by either of them with any third state or states." The contracting parties also undertake not to enter into any international obligation incompatible with the present pact. Article 5 states that the pact shall be "open for accession to any member state of the Arab League or any other state actively concerned with the security--and peace in this region and which is fully recognized by both of the high contracting parties..."

In addition Iraq and Turkey exchanged notes which placed on record an understanding that the pact would enable the two countries "to cooperate effectively in resisting any aggression directed against either of them, and that in order to insure the maintenance of peace and security in the Middle East region we have agreed to work in close cooperation for effecting the carrying out of the UN resolution concerning Palestine."

I. Revivification of Inter-Arab Rivalries and  
Deterioration of Arab-West Relations

The ratification of the Turkish-Iraqi pact split the Arab world into two hostile groups, revivifying the dynastic rivalry between the Saudi and Hashimite ruling houses and the conflict between Egypt and Iraq over leadership in the Arab world. The Iraqi government aligned itself openly with the West and launched a drive to win to its side as many uncommitted Arab states as possible, concentrating mainly on Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. The Egyptian government, realizing that its claimed leadership of the Arab world was being challenged, began a counter-effort aimed at containing Iraq and at organizing an Arab bloc favoring Egypt's declared independent foreign policy. Saudi Arabia, fearing Iraq's growing strength, backed the Egyptian effort.

In the contest that followed, Egypt was able to achieve limited success in Syria, which was plagued by fragmentation in parliament and behind-the-scenes rule of an army clique antagonistic to Iraq's chronic desire for amalgamation with Syria. In early March 1955 the Syrian and Egyptian governments issued a "joint communique" containing a blueprint for future action.\* Saudi Arabia later subscribed to this communique, which became the basis of a projected pact identified as the ESS (Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia) pact.

Jordan and Lebanon, however, managed to stay on the fence between the two camps. Jordan based its position on its alliance with the UK and the bilateral treaty of 1947 with Iraq, which provides mutual assistance in case of attack and consultation on internal disturbances. The Lebanese government--which fears a serious threat to its independence

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\* The communique, which was not a formal and binding agreement, comprised the following points:

(1) A pledge not to join the Turkish-Iraqi Pact, or any other military or political alliance, without the consent of other members.

(2) The establishment of an Arab defense concert with a permanent joint command covering training, troop dispositions, military production, and communications.

(3) The creation of an economic union, directed by a permanent Economic Council. This union would be based on the issuance of a single currency by a regional Arab Bank, the reduction or elimination of intra-Arab customs barriers and the formation of joint limited liability companies to finance development projects with Arab, rather than foreign, control.

if Syria either is allied to Iraq or inflamed by Egypt--claimed that it has Arab unity at heart and assumed the role of honest broker.

Remote Yemen, feuding with the UK over controversial territory separating Yemen from the UK protectorate of Aden, is considered sympathetic to the Egyptian position. The Libyan government is considered pro-Western and privately sympathetic to the Turkish-Iraqi pact. Publicly, however, it gave lip service to the Egyptian viewpoint.

Syria, divided internally on the question of alignments, fearful of losing its profitable trade with Iraq and doubtful of Saudi Arabian and Egyptian ability to deliver promised military and economic assistance, found it necessary to expound in detail on the economic section of the proposed pact and to extract irrevocable commitments from both the Egyptian and Saudi Arabian governments before finalizing the agreement. The Egyptian and Saudi Arabian governments, unwilling to agree to most of Syria's economic and military aid conditions, and discouraged by their failure to win Lebanon and Jordan, somewhat relaxed their pressure on Syria for quick conclusion of the ESS pact.

The intensification of inter-Arab struggle regenerated by the ratification of the Turkish-Iraqi pact produced two significant developments unfavorable to Western objectives in the Near East:

- (1) In Syria, neutralist, Communist, anti-West and opportunist elements, aided by Egyptian and Saudi Arabian machinations, found a common cause. They combined their efforts to defeat or intimidate pro-West elements and to sell their own ideas, without effective opposition, to a frustrated and disillusioned public. In a fragmented parliament they managed to wedge themselves into a position to manipulate and dictate the policies of the government and subsequently to penetrate its various services.
- (2) In Egypt, the initially pro-West military regime, frustrated in its efforts to arrive at a favorable settlement with the West, was driven to adopt a neutral policy similar to that of India. Although the regime continues to be anti-Communist in disposition, its tactical opposition to proposed Western regional defense schemes, as manifested in statements and

declarations by its key men and in its anti-West propaganda directed to domestic and Arab world consumption, has served well the anti-Western and Communist elements. And now the Egyptian government finds itself forced to continue a course it had taken primarily as a temporary measure of defense against domestic opposition and against Iraq's recent initiative toward Arab world leadership.

## II. Communist Intentions Toward the Arab World

Present Soviet and Chinese Communist attitudes and policies toward the Arab League states indicate a concerted, long-range Communist effort to deny the Arab East to the West, politically, economically, and militarily.

Apparently realizing that it is at a disadvantage in the Arab states, the USSR has since the beginning of the cold war endeavored to detach the Arab states from the West. In this effort it has thus far achieved limited success in Egypt and Syria, where the governments are weak and lack a broad base of support.

In its effort the USSR has concentrated on: (1) aggravating existing Arab-West differences and at the same time equating Communist objectives with those of the Arabs on such questions as the presence of Western-proposed regional defense schemes\*; and (2) convincing the Arab states and people that trade with the Soviet bloc would be more profitable for them than trade with the West and that the USSR is willing to extend to the Arab states badly needed equipment, denied them by the West, in exchange for agricultural products.

On the Palestine question the USSR and its satellites have not taken a definite stand. On certain occasions in the UN Security Council,

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\* Climaxing a long series of attacks by the USSR, local Communists and extreme anti-West nationalists against Western-sponsored Middle East regional alliances, the USSR Foreign Ministry issued on 16 April 1955 (one day before the opening of the Asian-African Conference at Bandung) a statement severely denouncing the West's effort toward alliances. The statement (given in Attachment 1) concluded: "If the policy of pressure and threats if sic continued toward the countries of the Near and Middle East, this question will have to be considered in the United Nations. The Soviet Government, supporting the cause of peace, will defend the freedom, independence, and noninterference in internal affairs, of States of the Near and Middle East."

however, the USSR apparently has deemed it advantageous to favor the Arabs in Arab-Israeli border disputes.

Communist China, although until recently not seriously concerned with Arab problems, lost no time at the April 1955 Asian-African Conference at Bandung in aligning itself with the aspirations of the Arab peoples.\*

Communist China allowed itself to be more definite on Palestine than did the USSR when Arab grievances against Israel were aired at Bandung. Chinese Communist Premier Chou En-lai, heading his delegation, in an obvious move to win the Arab states representatives to support of the Communist position, backed the Arab contention that the conference had the right to discuss the controversial Palestine issue. Later Chou cast his vote for an amended Arab draft-resolution condemning Israel for its adamant position toward unsettled Palestine questions and its refusal to carry out the UN resolutions on Palestine.

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\* In his address to the conference (reproduced in Attachment 2) Chou En-lai made the following pronouncement: "I would like to declare once again that the Chinese people extend their full sympathy and support to the struggle of the people of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia for self-determination and independence, to the struggle of the Arab people of Palestine for human right, to the struggle of the Indonesian people for the restoration of Indonesian sovereignty over West Irian (Netherlands New Guinea) and to the just struggle for national independence and the peoples' freedom waged by all the peoples of Asia and Africa to shake off colonialism."